Hold My Paw; Determining Paw Dominance in Dogs

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This project investigated whether dogs demonstrated paw preference during different activities, including standing, walking, and interacting with a treat. Previous research states that laterality refers to favoring one side of the body over the other, which in dogs can be observed through repeated use of one paw when performing tasks. This study tested whether dogs have paw preferences and whether that usage is consistent. A total of 105 dogs of various ages, sizes, and genders were tested using three tasks: standing, walking, and treat retrieval. To ensure consistent conditions, all dogs were given the same treat, handled by the same person, and tested in the same order. The independent variable was the type of task, and the dependent variable was which paw the dog used during each task. Two groups were tested. Group one included 30 shelter dogs and 30 pet dogs. Group two included 45 pet dogs and was analyzed to observe trends in size, sex, and age while completing the same tasks. Dogs that used the same paw in all three tasks were classified as completely right-pawed or completely left-pawed. Dogs that used the same paw in two tasks were classified as mostly right-pawed or mostly left-pawed. Overall, 13 dogs remained consistent across three days, while the rest of Group 2 were inconsistent. In Group 1, 39 of 60 dogs showed right paw dominance, while 21 showed left paw dominance. The results supported the hypothesis that most dogs prefer their right paw and that certain factors affect preference; however, consistency was not supported. This demonstrated that dogs incorporate laterality in daily activities.

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